

SECKER

A

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable the

LORD-MAYOR,

THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

THE

SHERIFFS,

AND THE

GOVERNORS of the several
Hospitals of the City of *London*,

AT THE

Parish-Church of St. BRIDGET,

ON

MONDAY in *Easter-Week*, 1738.

By THOMAS Lord Bishop of OXFORD.

LONDON:

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St. *Dunstan's*-Church in *Fleetstreet*. M DCC XXXVIII.

Barnard, Mayor.

Tuesday, *the 11th Day of April, 1738,*
and in the Eleventh Year of the
Reign of King George the Second,
of Great-Britain, &c.

IT is Ordered, That the Thanks of this Court be given to the Right Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, for his Sermon preached before this Court, and the Governors of the several Hospitals of this City, at the Parish-Church of St. *Bridget*, on *Monday in Easter-Week* last, and that he be desired to print the same.

MAN.



I PET. iv. 10.

*As every Man hath received the Gift, even
so minister the same one to another, as
good Stewards of the manifold Grace of
God.*



THE Inducements we have, to relieve the Miseries, and promote the Good of our Fellow-Creatures, are, God be thanked, both many in Number, and of various Kinds. Our Hearts naturally incline us to it: Our Reason approves of it as right. The more benevolent Disposition we are of, the truer Peace we have within; and the greater Capacity of social Happiness, the sweetest Part of the Enjoyment of Life. Willingness to do good, is always rewarded with the Esteem of Mankind; and Selfishness of Temper, the constant Object of every one's Aversion. We

have frequent Experience in ourselves, what Suffering is: And are therefore inexcusable, if we overlook it in others. We live in a World, where, were it not for the Exercise of Mercy and Pity, the Face of Things would look dreadful with miserable Objects; and the Multitudes of Persons driven to Despair, make Society unsafe. Besides, we know the Vicissitudes of human Affairs: And are nearly concerned, to encourage by our Example that Spirit of Goodness and Compassion; which We or Ours may, on one Occasion or other, easily come to have great need of.

These are powerful Motives to Beneficence: And yet the Influence of them is too commonly exceeding small. The Hearts of some Persons have but little Sensibility: and those of others, a very confined and partial one. Some content themselves with talking of Benevolence, instead of cultivating it; or with the inward feeling of good Affections, instead of exerting them: And others give Scope to their wrong Inclinations, and their right ones, promiscuously; and so easily do more Harm in the World, than Good. Speculative Reasonings but few Persons attend to: and fewer still are governed by them in Practice. Their Liableness to the common Accidents of Life, Men either forget amidst the Pleasures of it; or turn into an Argument, for attending the more closely to their own Interests. As for Reputation; a few Acts of Goodness, well managed, will obtain as much of it as they are

concerned about. Or, if they cannot be esteemed; they may hope at least to be courted. And even if they fail of this; they can affect to despise it, and appear, notwithstanding, happy: Some in their Wealth, some in their Voluptuousness.

Our wise and good Maker hath therefore not left us to the Influence of these Motives only: But, as he saw it necessary, that in all our Ways we should be directed by Regard to Him; so he hath added infinite Force to the abovementioned Considerations, by giving us the Knowledge of Himself, and teaching us to look on them as Evidences of his Will. He undoubtedly designed the good Things of this World, not for the Gratification of a few of his Creatures; but for the Benefit of all. And he hath divided them unequally amongst us; not that one part of the human Race should sink under Misery and Want, and the other look down with Contempt upon them: But that Pity and Gratitude should be mutually exercised, and the Pleasure of doing and receiving good, felt among Men: That the Poor should be serviceable to the Rich; they, in return, kind to the Poor; and Both united in the Bonds of mutual Good-will, from a Sense of their mutual Dependency. These, it appears from the Knowledge we have of his Nature, must have been his Intentions. The same Thing appears farther from the Nature he hath given Us, and the Circumstances he hath placed us in. And that no Sort of Evidence of it might be wanting

wanting, he hath made known to the World his Pleasure by exprefs Revelation also: Requiring of Heb. xiii. 16. us all *to do good, and to communicate*, both as we are Servants, bound in every Thing to obey him; and as we are Stewards, appointed and intrusted by him for this very Purpose.

Let us therefore confider, with the Seriousness we ought,

I. What general Influence it should have upon us, that we are *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*.

II. What Influence in particular with respect to those Methods of Charity, which are the Occasion of our present Meeting.

I. Let us confider the general Influence. Every Thing God hath done for the Good of his Creatures, is *Grace* or Favour to them: And every Thing he has placed in our Hands for their Good, is Grace of which we are Stewards. All the Means and Opportunities we have, of making the World, or any Part of it, better or happier; by our Knowledge or Wealth, by our Power or Interest, our Care or Pains, our friendly Behaviour or good Example; are given us in Trust, to be so exercised. How *manifold* these are, upon the Whole, is not perhaps easy for us, to be fully sensible: But we should each of us think very carefully, what his own Share of them is,

is, and wherein it consists. For no one is without his *Talent*, though some have more committed to them than others: and they who have least, will be expected to improve what they have; as our *Matth. xxv.* Saviour's Parable very awfully shews. The poorest^{14.—30.} Person in the World, is capable of being useful, some Way or other, to his Fellow-Creatures: And the greatest can never be above the Obligation, of imitating, to their Power, the Beneficence of their Creator. They who are engaged in Business, far from having their Attention confined to themselves, have usually, by that very Means, peculiar Advantages both for knowing and supplying the Wants of others. And such as have no particular Employment, have only the Privilege of a freer Choice, what Part they will take in that general one assigned to us all, of doing good.

Since then we are appointed, each in his proper Station, Dispensers and *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*; it concerns us to behave as faithful ones: Not to intercept the Streams of the Divine Bounty; nor confine to our own Gratification, what our Maker hath designed for the common Benefit of all around us. He hath not indeed fixed the Proportions of any Kind of Charity: For Circumstances vary so infinitely, that general Rules concerning such Matters are impossible. And this Latitude should not give Anxiety to any good Mind: for we serve a most equitable Master. But neither should it give Encouragement to bad Minds; and
make

make them imagine, that where nothing is ascertained, they may do just as little as they please. For God will expect from every one, what may be reasonably expected from them: and hath left this Matter at large, not that we may shew our Backwardness to serve him, but our Zeal. Imprudent Zeal he never approves: But Goodness, confined within the Bounds of Discretion, is always more acceptable to him, in Proportion, as it is more abundant. And, though not every Failure in Degree shall expose us to Punishment; yet *he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also*

2 Cor. ix. 6. *bountifully.*

Matth. xxv.
26.

However unactive therefore we may naturally be; yet, as Persons intrusted by the Lord of all, it imports us greatly to be diligent. For Industry is a valuable Part of Faithfulness: and *slothful Servants* will be considered in the Day of Judgment as *wicked* ones. Some Ways of doing good may possibly be less pleasing to us: Some Persons our Prejudices, our Passions or Interests, would tempt us to overlook, rather than serve: And some Things, that are only seeming Instances of Benevolence, we should be willing to mistake for real ones; and indulge a false good Nature, without Regard to Consequences, however bad. But when we consider, that in all these Cases we are to act for God; this makes a very great Change in the View of Things: And may both oblige us at some Times *to do with*

our

our *Might*, what perhaps we could least have wished; and restrain us, at others, from doing at all, what injudiciously we should have been the fondest of. Another important Use of looking upon ourselves in this Light, is, that how great soever our Talents may be, and how right soever the Use we make of them; it must still be the strongest Reason possible for Humility, one of the most excellent of Virtues, to think, that all we have is given us, and all we do is but *ministring*. Then, at the same Time that our being intrusted will teach us these Things, our being jointly intrusted will teach us another: Never to invade each other's Province, nor *stretch ourselves beyond our* 2 Cor. x. 14. *Measure; but as God hath distributed to every Man,* 1 Cor. vii. 17. *so to walk: For he is not the Author of Confusion,* 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *but of Peace.* God is the Judge, and a much better surely than we, what Employment is fittest for each of his Servants: And how enterprizing soever any of us may be now, or how discontented soever with the Narrowness of our own Sphere of Action; we may have Cause enough to be glad at last, that no more was committed to our Care. Yet these Reflexions must not be carried to such a Length, as to let the Business of our common Master suffer, under Pretence of its belonging, not to us, but our Fellow-Servant; when there is no Impropriety, but only somewhat more Labour or Expence, in stepping a little out of our Way, to prevent the ill Consequences of another's Neglect. It must be

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owned

owned a difficult Matter, not to mistake in these Cases on one Side or other: But involuntary Mistakes will never be imputed to us. It must be owned a very serious Thing, to be Stewards of God: But it is a very noble one, to be employed under our heavenly Father in the Work he delights in most; and for the Happiness of our Brethren, perhaps to all Eternity. If indeed we are found instead of this, either hiding the Talents committed to us, or wasting our Master's Goods, or misusing those to whom we ought to have ministered; then miserable will our Condition be, when God shall say to us, *Give an Account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer Steward.* But on the other hand our Comfort is, that a sincere Endeavour to discharge our Office as we ought, whatever our Difficulties, or whatever our Imperfections be, shall intitle us to the Sentence, *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

With the Impression therefore of these Reflections upon our Minds, let us now proceed to inquire

II. What Influence the Thought, that we are *Stewards of the manifold Grace of God*, should have upon us, with respect to those particular Methods of doing good, which are the Occasion of our present meeting.

Now these are of three Sorts, which indeed comprehend almost the whole of publick Charity:
Places

Places of Maintenance and Instruction for Children; Hospitals for the Sick; and Houses of Correction and Work for the dissolute and idle.

Relieving poor Parents from the Burden of a Family they are not able to support, must needs be a most welcome Charity to Them; and is evidently a very useful one to the Publick: for it tends to the future Increase of the Community, as well as to make the present Members of it happy. And teaching poor Children Religion and Virtue, one should think were plainly a beneficial Thing too. For let it prove ineffectual as often as it will; they must be a little more likely to abstain from what is wrong, for being taught what is right. Some Principles, some Notions of Life and Behaviour, they will learn: Which then would you have them learn, good or bad? They may indeed possibly learn bad Things mixed with good, under the Notion of Religion. But considering the Purity Religion is professed in amongst us, there cannot well be much of this Kind; and there needs not be any Thing. Some Persons, however, appear to have great Fears of Superstition: and no Fears of any Thing else. But do they really find in fact, that this is the reigning and dangerous Error of the present Age? Is it with Superstition, that your Servants, and your Children as they grow up, and the Generality of the People, are infected? or is it not with Profligateness: Such open and avowed Contempt of the Laws of God and Man, of all

Sobriety and Order, as this Nation hath never known before, and cannot long subsist under the Increase of? But if you are in Earnest afraid of Superstition; be afraid where you have Cause of Fear. There is a real, and a dreadful Superstition gaining Ground, that of the Church of *Rome*. And the more ignorant Men are of all Religion, and the more prejudiced against their own Form and their own Teachers of Religion; the more easily they are won over into that most corrupt and formidable Communion. And think, I intreat you, What would our Condition be; should ever the main Part of this Nation become, one half Papists, and the other Profligates! For as to the Scheme, of Virtue without Religion: even if it could be put in Practice, yet there is a God, and he ought to be feared; and there is a Support in Piety, which Mankind ought not to be deprived of. But whoever knows any Thing of the World, must see, that such a Scheme can never be put in Practice: that human Nature hath daily need, both to be restrained from Evil and excited to Good, in Cases where none but religious Motives can do either effectually. And as these have been constantly found necessary, in all Ages and Countries whatever: so they are certainly of the most indispensable Necessity, where Incentives to Vice are in the greatest abundance, and Liberty is the least controlled by Law.

But

Matthew. XI. 28.

Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

These words were spoken by our blessed Saviour, and contain in them these particulars for the Subject of w^t you'll find in the following Discourse.

First, The Call, or Invitation, come unto me.

Secondly, The persons called, they that labour and are heavy laden.

Thirdly, The Reward & Entertainment, and I will give you rest.

As to the first Particular, there is no occasion to insist much upon it; being an act of civility which we scruple not to perform to any one; no one that is call'd to his familiar & equal, will refuse to come, unless detain'd by Business of extraordinary haste & consequence; much less will he refuse to come, when call'd by his Superior, his Prince or his Master; and doubt not but we believe our Saviour to be all this & much more to us. Now this coming to Christ is not to be understood as a long tedious Pilgrimage, the compassing of Sea & Land, or a painful Search thro' all the mazes of death. The coming to Christ must be another kind of address of the Soul & Heart believing & receiving Him: for those three words signify the self-same thing in Scripture. Thus it is said, He came to his own & his own receiv'd Him not; but as many as receiv'd Him, to them gave

he poor or to become Sons of God, even to as many
as believe on his name. The like use of the
words we may observe, where our Saviour
tells the unbelieving Jews, Ye will not come
unto me that ye might have life; again, Jesus
said unto them, I am the Bread of Life: He
that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and
he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.
But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me,
and believe not. All that the Fa^r giveth me,
shall come to me; and him that cometh to me,
I will in no wise cast out. It is with an
active Faith to acknowledge him the Lord of
our Lives & the Guide of our actions, with
full Embraces to receive his Laws & Statutes,
and with all Readiness & Cheerfulness to obey
his Will. Thus we see the coming to Christ is
not the Flattery of the Tongue, not the crying
Lord, Lord; nor saying, Hail Master! for Judas
who betray'd him did this: nor further is it
the assent of the Understanding to the Truths
of the Gospel; for even the Devils themselves
believe & tremble. How miserably therefore
do they deceive their own Souls, who think
that this Duty of coming to Christ is only a
matter of Science & Speculation, that an
impudent Presumption & Reliance on the
mercies of God, that a strong Imagination
of an Interest with Christ will bring them to
Heaven! No not so; Christianity is not
a Dream, a Fancy, but a real warfare; a
warfare,

warfare wherein we are to fight against our selves,
to beat down our bodies, and bring them to
subjection; to fight not only against flesh &
blood, but against principalities & powers, against
spiritual wickedness in high places. Heaven
is not a place to receive corruption or unclean-
ness; whoever will be a saint above, must be such
below; and vainly doth he expect to be a member
of the Church Triumphant, that never serv'd
or labour'd in the militant, or entertain
hopes of receiving the prize, that ran not in the
race; or of dividing the spoil, that fought not
in the battle. Would we come to Christ? it is,
must be thro' difficulty & opposition, through a
sea of trouble & of danger; nay if it be his
pleased will, through a sea of our own blood.
Thus is He, the Captain of our salvation, gone
before, and thus he expects that we sh^d follow
after; On these Terms is his Invitation proce^ded,
Come unto me all ye that labour & are heavy
laden, & I will give you rest. Which leads
to the second Particular, The Persons called, or
whom the Invitation is sent, They that labour
and are heavy laden. Our Saviour calls
not to his Feast the wealthy Purchaser,
who hath bought a Farm & must go & see it;
nor the trafficking Dealer of this world, for
he hath bought Flocks of Oxen & must go &
love them; but he calls the poor & y^e maim'd,
the halt & the blind; He searches for justice in

the highways & hedges; thus he compels to
come to his support. But may it not seem
a very strange command to bid them that labour
come to him, people much fitter for quiet repose?
may not this seem rather a scoff than an
invitation signifying no more than this; if
the weary traveller that is not able to move
a step forward, may go to his Inn; if the overladen
slave that is not able to stand beneath his burden
can bear it to the place appointed to lay it down,
then may you find rest to your souls; according
to the prophet Jeremy, who says, can the Ethiopian
change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?
then may ye also do good that are accustomed
to do evil. But however God in his jealousy
and just indignation against sin, may sometimes
as it is expressed in the Book of Proverbs, laugh
at our calamity & mock when our fear cometh
yet when he speaks to us in his Son, he cannot
then forget the bowels of a Father, or look upon
our misery, without a tender & compassionate
regard to it. That faithful & merciful high
Priest, who vouchsafed to be tempted in all
points as we are, yet without sin, cannot but
be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.
Therefore may we safely apply to ourselves the
encouragement given to the blind man: Be
of good cheer, for he calleth us: nor need we
wonder at the strangeness of the fall;
He that can make the lame to walk, that
commanded Lazarus to come forth out of his Tomb,

when he was bound hands & feet with grievous clouts
and more ~~than~~ that, fettered in the chains of
Death; He that can give Life & motion to rotting
and make the Silence of Death answer to his
voice; He that can do these things & much more,
can surely, with his call, enable the sickly faint
passenger to arise & come to Him, the weary
to run his course like a giant refreshed with
wine, and the heavy laden to bear his burden.
But that we may more distinctly know those
designed & aimed at in this call, we must
remember that sin is expressed in Scripture
under the notion of a load or burden. Thus
the Royal Prophet complains, my Iniquities
are gone over my head, and as a weighty burden
they are too heavy for me. And very justly is
sin intitled to that name; for it is a weight
so vast & heavy, that it can sink us down, both
soul & body, into the lowest chambers of the
bottomless Pit; it is a servitude so full of toil,
so very weary some, that every sinner seems
have begun his Hell upon earth, and to be
punished for his wickedness whilst he committeth
it; he is a slave to as many Tyrants, as he
with members, thoughts & passions; he is laden
with Impurity, with vanity, with malice, and
overwhelmed with the Terrors of an affrighted
conscience; he is consumed with envy, set on
fire by lust, rent asunder with faction & discord,
troubled with anger, & disordered by a whole
body of sin & death. Yet so deplorable,

So miserable an object as this doth the compass
of God delight to behold & pity; He graciously
retrieves this Child of Darkness from the
precipice & brink of Ruin & Destruction,
thereby to transform him to an Angel of Light,
that where Sin hath most abounded, Grace
shd much more abound.

But to be a sinner is not a sufficient Title to
these mercies; there is then this further
requisite, that we be weary as well as heavy
laden. To be weary then of our Sins, is to
nauseate & distaste them, earnestly desiring to
discharge those Drops of that bitter Cup which
with so much goodnings we swallowed down
to hate & abhor, to be revenged on our souls
to be ashamed & confounded, because of the
Reproach of our Youth. Yet further, we
must be sure, that all this, be no transition
humour of repentance; for be our zeal
never so hot, if it be not regular & equal,
we must conclude it not to be our virtue,
but Disease, to be a Fever & not Religion.
But if we bring a natural & lasting heat,
if we are heartily sorry for our Transgressions,
if the Remembrance of them is grievous, and
the Burden intolerable, we may lay claim to
the Promise of St. Jeremi; we may confidently
to our Sav.^r & he will give us rest.
God's munificence is complete & endles as himself:
Every good & perfect gift comes down from
Him who is the Fa.^r of Light in whom is no shadow
or shadow of turning.

The good he bestows on such as come to him, is
entire constant & unchangeable. To the weary it
is rest; to the heavily laden an exceeding and
eternal weight of glory; to the sad it is mirth
and comfort, to the hungry & thirsty it is a
feast & banquet. The rest he gives is wide as
eternity, comprehending our past, present, and
future states. Those toilsome burdens, with
the weight of which the mournful Penitent is
humbled & brought low, our merciful Redeemer
engages to ease him of; the many grievous sins
we have from Time to Time committed against
the divine Majesty, he graciously undertakes
to cast behind us, to take away that hand-writing
which was against us, to blot out as a thick
cloud our Transgressions & as a cloud our sins,
to make the spotted leprous sinner clean and
pure, and render the defiled polluted one
whiter than snow: to heal our wounded
spirits, to refresh our souls with his comforts;
in a word, to bestow upon us the peace of God
in our Conscience for his Remission of our
sins, that peace which passeth all understanding,
which the world cannot give or take away.
And what a calm must sit upon that soul which
thus purged & purified, thus set at peace &
freed from the weight of present ill, and the
pangs, the shame & horrors of the past.
What tranquillity must fill his mind, who is in
this happy Situation! when he lieth down in his
bed, & sleep is binding up his senses, with

what Satisfaction, with what Complacency of
Soul, doth he commend himself to the Protection
of the Father of mercies, & God of all Comforts
and will he rise up, what ravishing Joye, w^t
earnest of Heaven dwell upon his heart
and crown each waking Thought!
Nor will these Comforts leave us, but reach
to our third Estate & attend us into the other
world. But had we the Tongues of men
and angels, the language of Seraphim, how
short would all our Rhetorick appear, to
express & transcend the Joye of that Rest,
which remains to the People of God, in the
next Life! This Rest is such a scene of
Happiness, that the very thought of it is
enough to overwhelm us. It is to have a Soul
refined & purified, not puzzled to guess at
Truths, but enabled to pierce them at one
view; to have a Body no longer weighty, but
all ray & brightness, or in the Apostles phrase,
a cloathing of Immortality & Glory; to have
to be all this, & infinitely more, to enjoy all
the Felicity of Heaven, the Charity of the
Glave deriving & whole good of all to every one,
and be made Partakers of the glorious Vision of
God himself. This is Rest & Quiet unspeakable,
unconceivable; to this our blessed Redeemer
affectionately invites, without Exception, all
who are grieved, & troubled, & wearied with
the burden of their sins; and assures & came to
such as come to him with a lively faith and
sincere Repentance. wherefore,

Wherefore to conclude; let us gird up & loins
of our minds, cast away every weight, and every
sin which doth so easily beset us: let our
lights be burning, & we ourselves prepared,
prepared to meet the blessed Bridegroom
prepared to come to Him who is the way, the
Truth & the Life; He is the way to guide us,
the Truth to give us light, and the bread of
life to feed us: He is the way in example,
for he hath given us an example, that we
should follow his steps: He is the Truth in Promise
for his Covenant he will not break, nor alter
the thing that is gone out of his lips: He will
not fail to give rest to every & heavy laden
who come to him; He is the life in reward,
for tho' the wages of sin be death, yet the
Gift of God is eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our
Lord. Let us make haste & delay not the time
to come to him, let us but set forward, and our
journey shall not be long & tedious; He has
already vouchsafed to come to us, when we were
great way off; The journey he took was of
as wide a distance as earth & Heaven:
He left the bosom of his eternal Father, the glory
he had with him before the world was, to come to
us, for us men & for our salvation. Let us
not then be like those savage federons recorded
in the gospel, that forced their saviour to
part their coats. When he calls, let us not
tarry, when he stretcheth out his hand let us respond
that at the great Day of final Retribution

when the Son of man shall come in his glory, &
all the Holy Angels with him, and he shall sit
upon the Throne of his glory, and all nations
shall be gathered before him, we may not
be found in the number of those, who shall
be set on his left hand, & instead of that
loving Compellation, come unto me, shall
have that terrible Sentence of Eternal
condemnation pronounced upon them.

I know you not whence ye are; I depart from
me, stand off, get you from me, without hope
of ever seeing me again, all ye workers of
Iniquity. That this may not be a dreadful
call of any of us, let us needily obey this
gracious, this happy call, a call to rest
that neither age can take from us, nor us
from it; a rest, which Thieves & violences shall
not be able to break through & ravish
from us.

To the enjoyment of such happy place, of
which glorious & eternal rest, God of
his infinite mercy bring us all, for the
sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ, to
whom with the Father & Holy Ghost, be ascribed
all Honor & Praise, might, majesty and
Dominion, now & for evermore Amen.

St Margaret Pattons 28 August - 43. St Ruths Presb - Church
Ludgate Chapel 4 Sep^r - 48. (2 March, 1744 - 5
St Michael Royal Feb. 3 - 43. St Michael Royal 22^d Aug
Ludgate 16 Sep^r - 44. (-45)

Psalm. LXXXIX. 48.

What man is he that liveth, and shall
not see Death? Shall he deliver his Soul
from the hand of the Grave?—

Every individual Person, without Limitation
or Exception, is strictly and properly concerned
in the present Subject of Discourse.
That is, every man shall die, as certain as
he now lives; nor is it in the Power of any
mortal, to secure & defend himself from
the Power of the Grave.
Although you're sensibly convinced of, and
establish'd in this great, important Truth, yet
is it necessary to stir you up, by putting you in
Remembrance of it, to awaken y^r attention,
to persuade you to consider y^r latter End, and to
lay before you what Influence the Certainty of
Death ought to have upon the management
and Conduct of y^r whole Lives.

If we take a Survey of this Life, we shall
find it expos'd to as many Dangers, as there
are either things or accidents in the wide
universe. We see ourselves, not only by
our Nature & Constitution subject to
varieties of Diseases, but every thing without
us, may those very things without us, we can by

by no means subsist, and frequent occasions
of our Dissolution: The Air we breathe, and we
so necessarily use for the maintenance of the
vital Flame, blasted with an unwholesome
vapour, infects with Plagues & pestilential
Diseases: Fire & water, those most useful
Instruments of Life, how often are they the
unhappy messengers of Death! Beside the
Events of these, I might add the numerous
Distempers arising from different Causes, from
Heat & Cold, from Rest & Labour, from
Sleep & watching: It would endle to recite
the many Roads & Passages to Death, which
are all wide & open, and passed through
in a moment's space. Surely therefore it
will become us to exercise our minds in
the Contemplation of a matter wherein we
are all so nearly concerned, and seriously lay
it to Heart. — But I know not how it
comes to pass, (So it is) there is a secret Pride,
a Root of Vanity, & self-Love in our breasts,
that would persuade us to think ourselves
something extraordinary, nor suffering us to
dwell upon & melancholy Thoughts of Death.
But whether men will hear, or whether
they will forbear, it hath pleased Almighty
God so to order the matter, that the whole
Creation proclaims this great, important Truth.
If we look up to the Heavens, we shall see
the Sun issuing from & womb of & morning, setting
within & space of a few hours; and this com-

comfortable Light, which now encircles round us,
will be buried anon in the grave of Darkness.
Look we on Earth, the grass & herbs before us; how
soon do they dry up & wither! Nay, how seldom
do they stay out that time, but either some hand
drops or mows them down, some Beast feeds
or some foot tramples upon them! The very
garments with which we cloath our bodies, and
lively Emblems of our mortality, and daily put
us in mind of our grave-cloaths; and what is
sleep itself but a warmer kind of death; wherein
both one asleep differ from one deceased but that
the next morning he is nearer his Resurrection
than this Representation of our Death we have
before us in our own persons every night.
Let me now transfer y^e thoughts to your fellow
creatures, men: When you see or hear of any of
them being seiz'd by Death, can you be so destitute
of understanding, so void of sense as not to be
concern'd? Were you in a besieged Town or
in the field before the Enemy, and one of
your shod see the next man to him shot dead
before him, would he not be startled at the
accident, as considering, that the same
instrument of Death, might as well have
done the same execution upon himselfe
again, were there out of this congregation
one assembled, one or two to be condemned
present Death, perhaps within the space of
two or three days, and was this choice to be
made without any respect had to persons of
quality, age, youth or sex, so that none could

possibly guess at the Parties to be taken hold on.
But every one might as justly imagine himself one
as any other: Were we now in this condition,
with apprehensions, think you, should we have, what
sad fears would beset us, what cold suspicions,
that each of us were the unfortunate Person on
whom the fatal Lot would fall? To speak the
Truth plainly; we are all now in this condition,
however it comes to pass that we think not
of it; for we all stand in the Presence of Almighty
God, with whom there is no Respect of Persons,
in whose hands is the Breath of all things living,
to dispose of it according to no other Rule,
than that of his uncontrollable Power and
infinite wisdom. Seeing then that Life
which we so highly prize, and so dearly love,
is surrounded with such Dangers & Uncertainty,
what other Course shall we take, but that
of managing & Employing the Remainder of
it to the best advantage, and taking occasion
even from the shortness of it, to make it
last to Eternity, and endure infinitely beyond
the ages of our forefathers; whose Days were
measured by seven or eight hundred years,
soon to that age, to which a thousand years
are but as one single Day.
The Business therefore of the remaining part
of this Discourse, shall be to lay before you, what
influence the Consideration of the Certainty
of our Death ought to have on the whole
management & conduct of our Lives;
and,

and that is, First, To lessen the value we are too apt
to put upon ourselves, and moderate our affection
for the things of this world. Secondly, To quicken
and stir us up in our preparations for the next
To pride themselves in youth, in Health, in Strength
in Beauty, in Superiority of Situation above others
This is the way of men, and this is their foolishness
For will their Health support itself beneath the
Pressure of the gout or stone? Will their Strength
withstand the shock of a long Ague, or bear the
Siege of a Consumption? Is youth a Preservative
against the Rage of a burning Fever? Is Beauty
Proof against Disease? Will the worms forbear
thy Comeliness? Will Death allow fairer Quarter
to the mighty Monarch than to the meanest Subject
to the noble than to the ignoble? Will the Pomp
and glories of this world prolong the Date of Life
one single moment? If none of all this be, and
that it is not we all know, & well would it be
with us if we did duly & to purpose consider it,
If Death at its approach levels the Scepter with
the Flaw, and leaves no Difference in the Inactest
beauties to distinguish them from the roughest
most unpolished Features, if it overshadows all,
High & low, Strong & weak, young & old, in one
uniform Darkness, how surely is matter sufficient
to humble the Pride & mortify the Vanity of man,
and to make him say to Corruption, Thou art
my Father, and to the worm, Thou art my
Mother & my Sister. Again, To mind earthly
things, to live in Pleasure & wantonness, and

make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof
to project schemes & designs for many years to come,
to trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in
the multitude of their riches, these are frequent
but fatal Delusions of the sons of men.
Nor have they consulted the book of Fate and
there discovered whose ages allotted 'em? will
their great designs and laborious contrivances,
secure them the privilege of a long life? will
their wealth ^{bribe} even Death to pass them by, and let
them go free? Hear what God said to the rich man
who wth ^{his} ground brought forth plentifully, though
within himself saying, what shall I do? because
I have no room where to bestow my fruits?
And he said, this will I do, I will pull down
my barns & build greater, and there will I
bestow all my fruits & my goods: And I will
say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods
laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat,
drink, & be merry. How fondly did this
mistaken man flatter himself in his own
eyes, and please his heart with the prospect
of many years of Life, as many of Pleasure
and sensual enjoyments! But an unlooked for
thought of accident broke in and spoiled
his whole Design; for God said to him, Thou
fool, this night thy soul shall be required of
thee. In that sad hour wth it shall please
God to require their souls, how small will be
the content & satisfaction of the voluptuous from
the consideration of those Delights in w^{ch} they've
spent their days, but must now leave 'em for ever! he

How will they then be vexed with horrible fear,
change their minds, groan for anguish of spirit, and
say within themselves, we have turned from the way
of Truth, we have wearied ourselves in the
way of wickedness & Destruction, and we have
gone thro' dangerous ways, and have not known
the way of the Lord. w^h hath guide profited
us? And w^h good hath riches, with our vanities
brought us? Therefore secondly, The consideration
of the certainty of our Death, ought to quicken
and stir us up in our preparation for the next
it is, I fear, an equally certain & melancholy
truth, that many, w^h they lie on the Bed of sickness,
w^h the Physician hath left 'em, & there remains
no hope of Life, then, in all haste, but not till then,
send for God's minister to fit them for Heaven:
then, w^h they are leaving the world & all they
love therein, they seem to turn devotee on a sudden,
and set up for a ~~strict~~ course of Piety, as if Heaven
were an Hospital design'd for decay'd worn-out
linners, & might be had at any Time for asking:
Now their wealth & Riches, giv'd 'em no content,
they would by all means & all speed, be directed
the way to Paradise, to the blessed mansions of
the new Jerusalem: Now their appetite is lost
& gone, they earnestly desire to be brought
to the Supper of the Lamb, the eternal Feast
with Saints and Angels. There is none so
w^h & desperate a sinner, but w^h faints at the
thought of the righteous, and have his latter
end like his. W^h the King of Terrors approaches

him, wⁿ to the sick faintings of a weakⁿd body,
are added on one hand the passionate desire of life,
and on the other the violent abhorrence of
Death, and above all, the conscious horror of
a life divided between vanity & guilt, the
dread of an impartial Judgment at the awful
Tribunal of Christ, wⁿ every dissuasive from
vice, every motive to virtue, every opportunity
of doing good, and the obligations to it, w^{ch}
he slighted & rejected, shall stand as witnesses
against him, then doth he begin to confess the
madness of his former ways, and the desperate
pollies of his past life, and if a short reprieve
sh^d be granted him, vows a strict & soone
reformation. But since men know, that this
great change will one day come; since none
can tell how soon it will come, why do they
not provide against it? why do they not put
themselves in a fit posture, ~~not~~ to avoid the
onset of approaching Death, for that is out
of their power, but to alleviate its pressure
that it may be the less unwelcome?
I shall illustrate this by a familiar instance
I have, if you ask some men, why they take such
pains to lay up money, their answer is, that they
do it against the Time of sickness or old age,
very good; But w^t is the meaning then, that they
who are so provident in such cases, cannot look
a little further, and provide for the Time of Death,
which is the next thing to age & sickness, and
then, very often, comes before them. Again

Again; were you in a decayed house, decayed so as
to be every Day in danger of having it fall upon
your Heads, you would surely look out some other
habitation as well for yourself or Family; or
were your Dwelling never so convenient, firm
and good, yet would you, or having no Form in
it, but liable to be turned out at a minute's
warning, certainly have an eye upon some
other. That this House of our Body is decayed
and ruinous, and besides this, that we have no
certain Time in it, you will readily grant;
now is it then, that you look not out for some
other habitations against the Time you may
be compelled to leave these; that since your
being is so uncertain, at least you remove
out some of your goods, and secure part what ever
may happen to the Rest; lest on a sudden you
be forced thence, and oblig'd immediately to
go away destitute, or while you stay to remove
your goods, your tottering Dwelling fall upon your
heads, and bury you together in one Ruin?
To conclude; let us ever bear in our minds
this great important Truth, that we must certainly
one Day, how soon we know not, go down into
the Grave, the Center to which all men are tending
It is also remember, that as it is appointed unto
men once to die, so after this will be the Judgment
when the Son of man shall come in the glory of his
Father, with his Angels, and shall reward every
man according to his works. Let us have

always

We cannot indeed understand the manner
of his generation; This is among the secret
things which belong to God; This is knowledge
too excellent for us; we cannot attain to it.
It is enough, abundantly enough for us, to know
that God, the first Person of the Holy Trinity, is
the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Jesus
by nature is the begotten of the Father; that to
none else but God the Father this Paternity belongs
and to none else but God the Son this Filiation
belongs. Instead of entering in to difficult speculations
and perplexing ourselves & others with curious
disquisitions, it is far better for us to affect our
souls with a warm & vigorous sense of this
comfortable Truth, That God is the Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ; and be thereby induced to bless
him, who is the Spring of so much happiness to us
by being the Parent of so blessed a Son; a Son
in whom by a voice from Heaven, he declared
himself to be well pleased; whom, according to his
own purpose & Grace, in the fulness of Time he
sent forth from his own Bosom to take our mortal
nature upon him, & be born of a pure Virgin, in
order to reveal his will to mankind, to give
knowledge of Salvation to his People for the
remission of their sins; to give light to them
that sat in darkness & in the shadow of Death,
and to guide their feet into the way of Peace.
That Son, thro' whose all-sufficient merits we are
entitled to an access to God, even the Father, and
the inestimable privilege of adoption, and
becoming the Sons of God, and if Sons, then Heirs,
Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ.
The

The mother of our Lord, filled with joy & Transport,
declared concerning herself, from henceforth all
generations shall call me blessed; and shall a less
obsequious office be performed to his Father? Shall
not all generations, all men in those successive
generations call him blessed? If we honour him
who descended from the height of majesty, and came
down from Heaven, not to do his own will, but the
will of him that sent him, shall we not honour
the Father by whom he was sent? Shall we not
magnify the Love of God towards us, which was
manifested in this, because that God sent his only
begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro'
him? And if it was predicted of Christ, that all things
should fall down before him, all nations do him service
and with united voices, call him blessed. Shall less
contribution of blessing be paid to his eternal Father?
Secondly, another Reason why we ought to bless God,
because he is the Father of mercies. Mercy is his
true offspring; he challenges that as proper to
himself; he delights, he glories, he triumphs in the
exercise of it, he is not only a merciful God, but
God of numerous & manifold mercies: But above
all; how did he abound towards us in the riches of
his mercy, by sending his Son into the world, for us
men & for our salvation, to seek us w^h we had
gone astray, to redeem us w^h we were utterly lost,
and sold to work wickedness, to lay down his life
for us, w^h we were dead in Trespases & Sins,
make us partakers of the means of grace in this
world, and the blissful hopes of glory in the next!

The Redemption of mankind by our Lord Jesus Christ, with its happy consequences, is such an ^{infinite} treasure of mercy, which human measures can by no means estimate, which human thoughts can by no means comprehend, and which could only flow from the boundless compassions of our gracious God. Filled with a lively sense of the divine mercies towards him, the Royal Prophet with admiration and amazement cries out, Lord what is man that thou hast such respect unto him; or the Son of man, that thou so regardest him? Thirdly, another reason why we ought to bless God is, because he is the God of all comfort. Our blessed Lord had told his Disciples, that upon his departure from them into Heaven, they should endure much trouble, should be persecuted, delivered up to bonds & imprisonment, to death itself for his name sake. But he bids them be of good cheer; he opens to them an agreeable prospect of a blessed Comforter, who should support their drooping spirits, be always present with them, and endure them with a firmness of mind that no afflictions should shake & discompose. Accordingly, they became new men; they were animated with unusual courage & resolution; they preached before the rulers of ^{the} earth, their suffering made them and were not ashamed of ^{the} one, nor afraid of ^{the} torments of ^{the} other. They were troubled on every side, but not ^{truly} distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. Agreeably here to the bless.

martyrs

martyrs and Confessors amidst their shame, anguish
and cruel treatment, had still the bright irradiations
of comfort from on high, and the vital influence of
God's favour & acceptance showered down upon
them. And the same inward consolations which
were dispensed for the support of Christians, in the
ages of persecution, are still vouchsafed to all
true believers with regard to their sorrows &
troubles, whether temporal or spiritual; to
strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble
knees; to dispel the fears, to revive the spirit of
the humble, and to revive the heart of the
contrite ones; to make them hear of joy & gladness,
such as the world, with all its smiles & flatteries,
cannot give, nor with all its terrors take away;
to make them rest content in the dispensations
of Providence, how contrary soever to flesh & blood,
and cheerfully resign themselves to the Divine will;
and when their dissolution draws nigh, devoutly
commend their spirits into the hands of their faithful
Creator, who is the strength of their heart and
will be their portion for ever. Justly therefore
we say with the Apostle, Blessed be God,
the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in
all our Tribulations. Having thus ^{to them} briefly considered
the duty of blessing God, I now proceed, in the same
manner, to shew, that if God is not blessed, and how he
may be blessed, as also who they are, that discharge
his duty aright. There is a sort of men, who have
indeed in their thoughts indeed, but it is only to dishonour
and blaspheme his name; a name, which they employ
instead

instead of using it as great, wonderful & holy, to
furnish out matter for their light profane discourse
and bring down God from the highest Heavens to
witness that, wch they would be ashamed to call a
sober man to attest. How ill, how monstrous
is the return for all the bitter sufferings, the
wounds & bloodshedding of the Son of God for
the sons of men, w^{ch} they shall have no other
use made of them, but to be the subject of
oaths & dreadful Excommunications! and how can
the presumptuous sinner, in his last extremities
call upon that God to bless & save him, whom
he hath a thousand times before, upon every, upon
no occasion, called upon to confound and
damn his soul? These are open & notorious
Violations of the duty of blessing God: There is
another sort of men of equal guilt, tho' cloathed
with a fairer outside than the other: These are they
who have the form of godliness, but are destitute
of its power; who amidst their soft & flattering
words are full of guile & bitterness within.
Thus we see that this duty, however easy it may
appear, is by many slighted & violated. Indeed it
is not every one that can say with affection
and from the heart, blessed be God! Every
wicked man, whose Intercessor it is, that there
shd be no God in Heaven, no righteous Judge to
try the heart & King, & give to every man
according to his works, I say, ~~any~~ such men
are so far from being willing that God shd be blessed
that they most earnestly desire, most passionately wish
that there were no God at all.

Having

Having seen in w^t manner, and by w^t Persons, God
is not blessed, let us now see how he may be
blessed and who they are that rightly & duly perform
this duty. First, we bless God wth sincerity, and
from the ground of the Heart, we acknowledge
him the sole author of all the good we enjoy,
and offer him Thanksgiving & Praise for all the
benefits we have receiv'd at his Hands.
Blessing & praising God, are Terms of equal
importance; Thus David breaks forth in to these
apturous strains: I will extol thee ^{God my} O, thing.
and will bless thy name for ever & ever.
As for that glory, which God receives from the
raises & acknowledgements of man, we must
confess that such are below the infinite height of
his unbounded Essence; his State is unchangeable,
no way capable of any new addition of Honour
from the best of our services. Yet are they
pleasing & acceptable to his divine Majesty—
not for our sakes only, & not for his; inasmuch
as we thereby endeavour to answer the gracious
will & Design of his bestowing his Favours upon
us, and act as becomes grateful creatures, over
whom he rejoiceth to do us good. Full therefore
of a true sense of his unspeakable goodness, we
will bless the glorious name of God, which is
above all blessing & praise; we will summon
all our powers & faculties to give him Thanks,
as holy David did, Bless the Lord O my soul, and
that is within me, bless his holy name.
That this is the very utmost power & energy of our

Nature, appears from hence; that the blessed Souls
of Saints made perfect, and equal to angels, have
that Angelical office for their great Employment
and Exercise, receiving new & fresh felicities,
and as duly acknowledging their just Remembrance
of them. They rest not Day & night, saying,
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and
is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to
receive glory, honour & Power, for thou hast
created all things, and for thy pleasure they
are & were created. Secondly, we may bless
God in his name: w^h we take it with fear and
Reverence, acknowledge & declare it to be holy
and speak not of it but with due apprehensions
of its transcendent Excellency; w^h according
to our ^{respect} ~~abilities~~ abilities, we sincerely & zealously
endeavour, that it may ^{be} more blessedly dealt
with, & honoured by others, that it may be glorious
above all the world; that it may be called upon
by all nations, and become the praise of the
Ends of the Earth. Thirdly, Every Transaction
of our Lives is to bear a part in it. And as
the Apostle observes, whether you eat or drink
or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
In a word, in order to the faithful discharge
of this Duty of blessing God, there must be the
Employment of the whole man in all his
relations; we must study to approve ourselves
to him, by a cheerful Submission to his Providence
an unfeigned Piety & uniform Obedience to his laws
by Temperance & Sobriety, & chastity, in reference to
our selves; by Justice, Truth & universal Charity to our
neighbours.

This was the very design, & primary End of the
Gospel Dispensation: The grace of God, which
at Paul's preaching bringeth Salvation, hath appeared
to all men; teaching us, that we having denied
ungodliness & worldly Lusts, we should live soberly,
righteously, and godly in this present world;
looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious
appearing of the great God & our Saviour Jesus
Christ, who gave himself for us, that he
might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify
unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of
good works. Let us therefore fit ourselves,
purity of Life, for this ^{most} pure & sacred
work of blessing God: Let us lift up our
grateful hearts to him, & shew forth his
praises, not only in our lips but in our lives,
giving up ourselves to his service, and
walking before him in holiness and
righteousness all our Days: that so, having
in the best manner, and by all the ways our
condition in this world is capable of, blessed
God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of
mercies, & the God of all Comfort, who it is now
our Duty, may hereafter become our recompense.
And we may with Angels & Archangels and
the company of Heaven for ever ascribe blessing
to God, & be for ever blessed with the glorious vision
of him, who is the fountain of all happiness, in
whose favour is life, in whose presence is fullest
joy, & at whose right hand are pleasures for ever.
The Father of the Father is more.

St Michael Royal. on College-Hill th 12 Aug. 1743.
Ludgate 1st April - 44
St Michael Royal 27 July - 44.
St Thomas's Hospital 25 July - 44.
Ludgate 4 August 1745.
St Michael Royal Sept 1745.
Westmonastery 12 Jan. - 45



But to return. Together with the general Rules of their Duty, these Children are taught such other Knowledge, as may qualify them for Employments fitted to their Station: and then disposed of to such Employments; with a farther Assistance, where it is requisite, of some little Matter to set out with, towards gaining a Livelihood. And this also surely must be of publick Benefit. Were they indeed either taken or kept away from other Business, more useful, or in which Hands are more wanted; were they raised, without visible Merit, above their original Rank, into one of less Labour or more Knowledge, to the Prejudice of those who were by Birth their Superiors: Such Things would be just Objections, though not to the Institution of these Schools, yet to the Management of them. But when only the Parents are kept from Distress, and the Children from Idleness or wicked Courses; when Care is taken, to chuse them from a Condition suitable to what they are designed for; and neither in their manner of living, nor their Instruction, to set them above that: Every one will allow, it would be excellent private Charity to do this for a Child; and why not as good publick Charity, to do it for many Children; since the greater the Number is, the less in Proportion the Expence?

The second Method of doing good, before us at present, is that of Hospitals for the Sick. And whatever Objections may be made against other

Benefactions to the Poor, there can be none against restoring Ease and Health to them : against giving them those Helps which their distressed Families cannot give ; and enabling them to be useful again to themselves, and to the Publick. Now Hospitals are infinitely the best Means to this necessary End. They are a sure Way of detecting Counterfeits : they preserve the Sick from unskilful Hands : they are so many publick Schools, where the Knowledge of Medicine is taught, in the most effectual manner, for the common Benefit of Mankind. They relieve many such, as Parishes may not think themselves bound to relieve : and they do it, beyond Comparifon, in the surest, the speediest, and the cheapest manner that can be. So that, were we to suppose even great Mismanagements in Hospitals ; they would still remain preferable to all other Methods of providing for the Sick : and yet the Numbers and Characters of the Governors of all our present Hospitals, secure them, as far as may be, against any Mismanagement at all. Another Advantage is, that ever so little given to this kind of Charity hath its proportionable good Effect : and the Diseases and Accidents, which befall the lower Part of the World, are so many and frequent, that ever so much given, may easily be employed. Then it well deserves to be considered farther, that Sicknefs affords a favourable Opportunity for good Impressions : and therefore most important Service may be done to poor Creatures

tures in these Places, by shewing them from Experience the bad Consequences of vicious Lives, and the good ones of Regularity; by giving them strong Impressions of the Excellency of Compassion and Mercy, at the Time they are partaking of it; and awakening them to a Sense of what their Condition requires of them, and their eternal Happiness depends upon. But the Benefit of Hospitals hath been so very well explained to the World of late,* and is so generally acknowledged; that I need only add a Word concerning one Sort of them, That for the Diseased in Mind.

These poor Creatures are made by their Disorder, whilst it continues, intirely useles to Society: and many of them, at the same Time, exceeding miserable in themselves; by the frightful, or the gloomy Train of Ideas, that possesses their Minds; and the vehement Passions, that so frequently agitate them. Now when Persons in low Circumstances fall into this unhappy State, as many of them do; their Friends are more incapable of taking Care of them, than in any other Case whatever: and there is no Way of attempting their Cure, which can possibly be attended with such Hope of Success, as placing them in Hospitals appropriated to this Purpose. And even when there appears no Prospect of a Cure at all, to provide

* See Dr. *Alured Clarke's* Sermon, before the Governors of the County-Hospital at *Winchester*: and an Account of the Establishment of that Hospital, published last Year.

for them as Incurables is a most useful and excellent Act of Humanity : and the Beginnings lately made, of a Provision of this Sort, well deserve Encouragement, and peculiarly want it.

The only Kind of Charity, which remains to be spoke to now, is that of Houses of Correction and Work for the Diffolute and Idle. The Terror these Places strike, is one great Benefit : as it prevents at once, both Crimes and the Consequences of them. But where that proves ineffectual, the next Advantage of such Houses is, that Offenders can be immediately secured in them : removed out of the Way of endangering the Properties, the Lives, the Virtue of others ; and made to feel, that their Attempts of gaining a Livelihood by easier Methods than honest People do, shall only subject them to harder Labour, and deserved Punishment. Many of them, we are assured, have been brought by these Means to a just Sense of their Interest and their Duty. Very many more, we have sad Experience, much need to have this Kindness done them. And we cannot but know the Importance, both to them and to ourselves, of checking the Growth of Wickedness, before it is quite too late to think of attempting it.

These then being the Methods of Charity now before you ; consider well what Obligations you are under, as Stewards of God for the Good of your Fellow-Creatures, to assist in directing and supporting them.

Such,

Such, in the first Place, as are qualified to govern and direct any of these Institutions, are bound in Conscience, not to let so excellent Designs receive Prejudice, for want of a Succession of fit Persons to put them in Execution. For a little Time may well be spared, both from Pleasure, and from Business of other Kinds ; to employ it in a manner, so productive of Happiness to the World, and to themselves. And such as have actually taken this good Work upon them, must ever remember, that they are now become Stewards of the Charity of Men, as well as the Bounty of God : and their Faithfulness in the Discharge of their Trust is engaged to both. They, whose constant Attendance cannot be expected, should at least acquaint themselves so far with the Management of Things ; as to know, and be able to assure others, that it is, in the main at least, such as it ought : for in many Cases, this alone may be a valuable Service. And all, who profess to enter farther into the Conduct of Affairs, should seriously, and frequently, and impartially consider, what can be reformed in these Charities, and what can be improved. A meddling Spirit, fond of disturbing Things that are well, either to no good Purpose, or none that can be obtained, is indeed a very mischievous one: but prudent, peaceable Endeavours, to make every Thing as perfect as it can be made, are of incredible Use. The Work you are engaged in, is a very important one: and a small Defect of Attention,

a little wrong Bias or mistaken Judgment, may produce exceeding unhappy Effects : may diminish considerably the Benefit of these excellent Designs, Rom.xiv.16. and make even *your Good evil spoken of*. The Support of voluntary Charities depends entirely on their Reputation : and therefore it concerns you greatly, to avoid, not only every Thing blameable, but 2 Cor.xi.12. every Thing suspicious ; and to *cut off Occasion from them which desire Occasion* to find Fault, *pro-* 2Cor.viii.21. *viding for honest Things, not only in the Sight of the Lord, but in the Sight of all Men*. But more especially give me Leave to recommend to you, that as you are intrusted for the Good of your Fellow-Creatures, you would have great Regard to their eternal Good : and that, as you are employed for the Service of God, you would express your Concern for his Honour, by endeavouring conscientiously, to imprint a Sense of Religion and Virtue upon all that come under your Care in these Places. It is the Want of Religion and Virtue, that occasions this dreadful Number of Distresses and Disorders in the World : and so long as the Cause subsists, the Effect will follow. Let your Children therefore be carefully bred up to Piety, without Superstition or Uncharitableness ; to Loyalty, and Honesty ; to Humility, and Industry. Let your Sick be instructed and admonished, suitably to their Capacities, their present Condition, and past Behaviour. And let the Correction of your Offenders be made as medicinal as it can : and a charitable

ritable Care for reclaiming them, by proper Expostulations, and friendly Advice, be joined with whatever Severity it is necessary they should undergo. There are undoubtedly amongst them great Objects of Pity; Persons far from deserving to be despaired of: and surely these, as far as it is possible, should have some distinguished Regard shewn them. But so much Regard at least should be shewn to them all, and to the Publick at the same Time, if we have any Concern for its Welfare; as never to suffer Places appointed for the Punishment of Wickedness, to become Schools for learning it.

And now, having taken upon me to say thus much to you, it is but justice I should add, that Exhortations by no Means imply Distrust. *Having Confidence in thy Obedience, saith St. Paul to Philemon, I write unto thee, knowing, that thou wilt also do more than I say.* And never can there be better Ground for a Confidence of this Kind, than at present: when these Charities are conducted by so large a Number of good, and wise, and experienced Men, under the Inspection of a Magistracy so worthy of Honour; and over which presides a Person, whose uncommon Abilities we all see exercised every Day, for the Promotion of Religion and Virtue, of the Peace and good Order, the Welfare and Happiness of this great City, with the most exemplary Disinterestedness, and the truest

Prudence, the most active Zeal, and the tenderest Humanity.

I proceed therefore now, with great Satisfaction, from the Duty of managing these Charities well, to that of supporting them. And one Way of supporting them is, by speaking of them with the Esteem they deserve. These publick Institutions, and some of them more especially, have had great Accusations brought against them by many Persons. But stay to enquire, and hear, before you condemn. You may possibly judge wrong, concerning what ought to be done: and you may very probably be misinformed, concerning what is done. Things which have happened very seldom, if at all, may be spoke of to you as happening frequently. Mistakes corrected long ago, may be charged as continuing still. Inconveniencies may be unjustly heightened: Advantages unjustly depreciated. Should this be so; and should the Things you are declaiming against, be all the while excellently good ones: think only, what Harm you are doing to Mankind. Perhaps indeed, nay certainly, they are not perfect. But are they not well? Or if not, cannot they be made so? If they can, use your Endeavours that they may. Shew a good Meaning, and you will acquire an Influence. But even should you after all be unsuccessful; still reflect a second Time: Is it not more eligible, that these Institutions should continue as they are, than fall to ruine. For, supposing some

better Way might be contrived ; is there any Certainty, is there any Prospect, of this better Way being taken? And if not ; never pull down, till you are likely to build again.

But affording good Words alone to Charity, is very insufficient. As faithful Stewards of the Divine Bounty, you must communicate of the Wealth also, which is placed in your Hands for that Purpose ; *and minister, as of the Ability which* 1 Pet. iv. 11. *God giveth.* The Importance of supporting these Methods of doing Good, so far as it appears from their general Nature, you have already heard. But when you are acquainted also with their large and increasing Extent, and their necessary Dependance on new Benefactions every Year ; these Things will be weighty additional Motives to your Liberality : and I intreat your compassionate Attention to the following Report of them.

Here the Report was read.

YOU have now heard the most forcible Arguments you well can hear, for contributing plentifully to the Charities before you. Eight hundred Vagrants and disorderly Persons, confined and employed, relieved and corrected, for their own Reformation, and your Security : Thirteen Hundred poor Children maintained, taught their Duty to God and Man, and qualified for Usefulness to the Publick : Thirteen Thousand sick Persons, taken

taken Care of in their Sicknefs. And thefe excellent Eftablifhments, you perceive at the fame Time, cannot fubfift without continual Help: though, would but your Bounty afford the Means for it, they are capable of being greatly enlarged. There are ftill Multitudes of poor Children very infufficiently provided for: and no fmall Part of them either taught or reduced to get a Livelihood by Wickednefs and Difhonefty. Still too many Offenders of more advanced Years, infest your Streets. And a very large Proportion of the Sick, that apply to your Hospitals, are forced to be rejected and left in their Mifery, for want of Room to receive them, or Income to fupport them. Think then what is incumbent on you in relation to thefe Things.

There are but two Reafons, and they are both very bad ones, that hinder Men from being charitable according to their Power: Either Covetoufnefs makes them unwilling; or Expenfivenefs makes them imagine they are unable.

If the former influences you; confider well, that your Happinefs for ever depends on doing your Duty: but your Happinefs even here doth not depend on enlarging your Fortunes. You may, if you will form yourfelves to it, enjoy great Satisfaction in doing good. But what Felicity can you poffibly find, either in the Confciousnefs of having, or the Vanity of being known to have, ever fo much Wealth more than you have any Occafion
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for? And besides, if the Enjoyment of *Man's Life* Luke xii. 15. did consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possessed: Charity may often be so contrived by Prudence, as not to diminish Wealth; and is often so blessed by Heaven, as greatly to increase it. I am sensible you have heard these Things, till you have brought yourselves by Degrees to be very little moved by them: but remember, God will expect, that having been reminded of them so frequently, you should regard them the more.

And if it be Expensiveness that with-holds you from Charity; in this Case also think with yourselves: for which Purpose is it, your Maker hath intrusted you? For Vices and Follies, or for Pity and Mercy? You may indeed plead, that Luxury, by the Numbers it employs, is perhaps the most extensive Beneficence. But this is a poor Pretence, evidently calculated to make yourselves easy in acting wrong. Undoubtedly the Wisdom of Providence hath contrived, that many who will do no Good in any other Way, shall, however, do some in this. But then it is usually done to those who need it least. A Number of Persons, well able to take Care of themselves otherwise, are maintained Part in Idleness, Part in Professions of no manner of Use; whilst the true Objects of Compassion, the Infirm and Helpless, are left unregarded to suffer and perish. Luxury therefore contributes nothing to answer the Intent of the Charities before us. And even those it doth provide for, it teaches
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at the same Time to ruin themselves by the Imitation of it. And in Proportion as it prevails, it destroys every where, both Virtue and Happiness, publick and private. But the numberless Evils of this most fatal Vice cannot be enlarged on now: and if the very little Good it doth, were very much more, yet, as no one will pretend to say, that Good was the Motive to his Expensiveness; it can never be a Defence of it. We must not therefore think, to make our Extravagance an Excuse for the Defect of our Alms: or hope in the least to mend our Plea, by calling those Things Necessaries of Life, which are indeed very blameable Superfluities.

Let therefore both the frugal and the expensive Man seriously consider, one, what Proportion his Charity bears to his Increase; the other to his Profusions: and each think of justifying themselves, not to the World, but to God.

Possibly it may seem a good Reason to some, for their own Neglect of the Poor; that the Law makes Provision for them. And it is certainly an Honour to the Law, that it doth: but no Honour to us, that it needs do it. Besides, there are very many Cases of great Distress, to which legal Provision is neither easily, nor properly extended: nor can it give by any Means so plentiful Relief as should be given, to the greater Part of those to whom it may extend. But suppose the Law capable of doing every Thing that needs be done: what
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would be the Consequence of leaving every Thing to it? That we should lose intirely the Means we have now, of proving to the World, and to ourselves, the Goodness of our own Hearts; and of making an undoubted Free-will Offering to God, out of what he hath given us. Persons of bad Minds may indeed take Occasion to neglect the Poor, from our Willingness to relieve them: and thus by their Fault, the Burden may fall heavier upon us than it ought. But then God who hath intrusted us, not only in Conjunction with others to do our Share, but separately by ourselves to do what we can, *is not unrighteous to forget this our* Heb. vi. 10. *Labour of Love*: but will take abundant Care that whatever we bear chearfully on his Account, far from giving us Cause of Complaint, shall assuredly be Matter of great Joy to us in the End.

Think then attentively of these Considerations. They are not proposed to you, for raising a sudden Warmth of Affection, and serving a present Turn: it is to your coolest Reason this Address is made. Reflect in Retirement on what you have heard. Act upon deliberate Conviction, act from a settled Principle in what you do: from that sublime Principle, which St. *Peter* directs to in the next Verse after the Text; *that God may be glorified in all Things, through Jesus Christ*: That you may express to Him your Sense of the Duty and Gratitude you owe him; that you may improve your own Hearts, by imitating the Goodness you honour;

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that you may convince Mankind of the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine. Consider yourselves, in this View also, as the Stewards of God : as intrusted for the Service and Promotion of his Gospel. For be assured, such important and astonishing Truths as that comprehends, and you have lately heard out of it, were not made known to you, with a Design you should be indifferent about them ; but deeply affected by them yourselves, and seriously diligent to engage the Attention of others to them. If then you have any Zeal for the Faith you profess, as Heaven knows there never was more need : shew Men, by its Effects, what it is ; and give Demonstration to the World, how far the true Charity of a good Christian goes beyond the boasted Benevolence of Unbelievers. Invite Men by this Means to a better Opinion of Religion : encourage them by the same to a steadier Practice of it. *Be watchful and strengthen, by every Method you can, the*

Rev. iii. 2. *Things which remain and are ready to die : but particularly make Provision in these excellent Ways, which are now proposed to you, for the Instruction of the Ignorant, the Conversion of the Vicious, the Spiritual Improvement, as well as Temporal Relief of the Sick : that so the Administration of*

2 Cor. ix. 12. *your Charity may not only supply the Want of the Saints, but be abundant also by many Thanksgivings unto God.*

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